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PROGRAM Confrontation STATION WRC Radio

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SUBJECT Admiral Turner

RICHARD DAY: Let's find out what's on the mind of our confronters this morning. Pat, let's go to you first.

PAT BUCHANAN: Okay, Richard. Ever since those two hundred veterans were fired six weeks ago, the CIA has been in the headlines and a subject of controversy. Anonymous agents have been attacking Director Turner as sort of a Captain Quieg (?) who has lost his ballbearings.

Meanwhile, Turner has been responding with public insult, denegrating his detractors as crybabies.

So today's question is a simple one: Has the Admiral outlived his usefulness; should Admiral Turner be removed as Director of the CIA?

Tom?

TOM BRADEN: Well, Tom, if we're going to fire somebody, we ought to consider evidence that he's done a bad job, or conducted himself outside the job in some irresponsible way. If you know of any such evidence in respect to Admiral Turner, I hope you're going to tell us about it, because all we know so far is that some people in CIA don't like him. Now I'm sorry to hear that, but I know of no precept in government or out that any man who's employees don't like him ought to be fired.

Now on the contrary, I've known a lot of bosses who were tough as bears, and very good bosses nevertheless. We also know that Turner has asked for the resignations of a great many members of what the Agency calls the clandestine services. You mentioned that. He's cleaning house, trying to run a taut ship.

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I thought that's what you conservative Republicans wanted government agency heads to do.

You people are always talking about the swollen bureaucracies in HEW, but just let somebody suggest that the CIA or the Pentagon are overstaffed and you sound as though you were about to lose an arm or a leg.

Now Turner may have made some mistakes in the men he chose to retire, but we don't know that. What we do know is that he's the first director in CIA history to reduce the size of the Agency. Do you want to fire him for that?

The last I heard, Pat, the CIA was still providing the President of the United States with up to date and accurate intelligence. That's what Turner was hired to do. There's nothing in the law or the terms of his appointment which suggests that in addition, he must be able to win popularity contests, or have the solid backing of the right wing.

Pat?

BUCHANAN: Well, Tom, I think the Admiral should be canned. And not simply for the purge he's carrying out, but for the brutal fashion in which it's being done.

Now even his friends concede publicly he is chopping away at the clandestine services with a meat ax. Now there is simply no excuse for telling men who have served their country honorably for twenty years to clean out their desks by January or be fired by March. And that's what Mr. Turner has done to two hundred veterans in a two sentence pink slip at that Halloween massacre at Langley six weeks ago.

Second, there has been duplicity from the Director's office. These firings are supposed to reduce clandestine services in the wake of Vietnam. But in 1969, at the height of Vietnam, there were 8500 slots in directorate of operations, which is covert operations. Four thousand of them had already been eliminated before Turner arrived at Langley.

In my guess the Admiral is piling up Brownie points with Mr. Mondale and the CIA baiters on Capitol Hill in the hope of becoming our next Chief of Naval Operations.

But whatever his motive, he has crippled morale at the Agency, he has lost the confidence of the men he is supposed to lead. During this Christmas season, the halls at Langley are decked out with anti-Turner graffiti. And no matter who is at fault, the Admiral cannot inspire men whom he has treated publicly with suspicion, hostility and even contempt.

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So Tom, for the good of the country, Director Turner himself should get one of those two sentence pink slips to clean out his desk by January or be severed by March.

DAY: That's our confrontation for Monday morning. And you heard the two sides of the question we have before you in our Direct Line, confrontation to the Direct Line question: Should Admiral Stansfield Turner be removed as Director of the Central Intelligence Agency.